

## Wyoming Worksite Wellness' ABC's for building a wellness program

Achieving administrative wellness support

Building a dedicated wellness team

Collecting appropriate wellness data

Developing a worksite wellness program plan

### Executing wellness interventions

Forming a supportive wellness culture

Generating the correct wellness outcomes evaluations

## Executing wellness interventions

Worksite wellness plans are designed to meet the needs of the employee population to reduce their health risk factors while meeting the needs of the employer by reducing medical claims and lost productivity due to absence. Now is the time you can utilize the data you collected (health screenings, health risk assessments, surveys, company reports on absenteeism and medical costs, etc) to determine which interventions will fit those needs. Remember to choose interventions that appeal to the workforce, and promote them in a way that shows the workforce that their employer cares about them. This may help foster feelings of good will between senior level management and the workforce.

WELCOA lists six tips for choosing the appropriate intervention:

*Implementing an  
intervention without  
workforce input and buy  
in is like sky diving  
without a parachute.  
You can reach for the  
rip cord again and  
again, but the result is  
still the same.*

Wyoming Worksite Wellness, 2008

- Talk to other wellness professionals about their experiences with different types of interventions, good and bad. Ask for advice on how to choose, structure, time, and promote activities.
- Ask senior managers to participate in activities, be members of wellness teams, and lend their support to your interventions.
- Build on successful activities by making them annual events, preferably at the same time of year. Improve them, and make them a part of the corporate culture and calendar.
- Get someone to take photographs whenever appropriate for use in newsletters, bulletin boards, and future promotions. Consider videotaping fun events; or collect video testimonials for use at company meetings.

WELCOA six tips continued:

- Plan how you'll evaluate interventions from the start. Make sure you have a way to measure participation, satisfaction, and related health benefits.
- There's a lot to consider when choosing interventions for your wellness program. Don't overdo, especially if your program is new and your resources are scarce. Give yourself time for adequate research, planning, and promotion. Next year you'll know so much more, and be able to refine the activities that worked, and add exciting new programs.

## Learning Objectives:

**By the end of this section you should be able to apply the necessary skills and knowledge gained in this section; along with the knowledge and skills gained in other sections of this toolkit to:**

- Determine the prevalent risk factors in your workforce
- Determine that interventions you choose consistent with what your workforce wants?
- Determine if the interventions you choose help management achieve their cost savings goals?
- Determine if the interventions are low in cost or high in cost when compared to the anticipated results?
- Find the resources for researching evidence based interventions

## Choose Appropriate Activities

There is a logical progression from needs-assessment data, to goals, to objectives, to activities. If the preceding steps are done well, deciding on activities will be the fun and easy part. Just be sure your choice of activities is based on the data you have collected, in order to get the best results from your program.

**Following is a useful system of classification of wellness program activities. Appendix “A” lists ideas at different cost levels for specific activities to get you started on the creative process:**

1. *Education, awareness, and support.* Topics can span a broad spectrum; for example, stress management, how to minimize your risk for certain conditions such as lyme disease or skin cancer, coping with change, conflict resolution skills, reminders about getting regular physical exams, balancing work and personal life, parenting skills, keys to a healthy marriage, healthy exercise, heart-smart nutrition, and financial planning. The information may be delivered in various forms, including lunch-and-learn or brown-bag seminars, posters in the workplace, tip sheets sent as home-mailers, and intranet web pages.
2. *Health screenings.* Often performed at health fairs, health screenings are aimed at detecting health conditions or risks that are best addressed early. These include diabetes, cholesterol, lean body mass and fat analysis, posture or spinal analysis, depression, and blood pressure. Breast, skin and prostate cancers, and certain other screenings, must be done in a clinical setting, such as a doctor’s office. Flu shots and childhood immunizations can be included in this category, though they go beyond screening.
3. *Safety and prevention.* This category includes back-injury-prevention training, ergonomic education, all workplace safety policies and procedures, and information about avoiding identity theft and other types of crime.
4. *Lifestyle change or behavior change.* Lifestyle or behavior change programs are among the most ambitious wellness activities. They seek to help employees who want help to make significant changes in their behavior around such issues as tobacco use, weight, diet, exercise, substance abuse, and stress management.
5. *Disease management.* Disease management programs aim to educate and coach employees with chronic health conditions about evidence-based best practices for managing those conditions. Conditions include back pain, depression, diabetes, asthma, cancer, hypertension, and obesity.

## Choose Appropriate Activities Continued:

6. *Stress-relievers.* This is a broad category, but mainly includes activities and initiatives aimed at creating a more positive, relaxing, and fun workplace. Some examples are a laughter bulletin board where employees can post cartoons and jokes, a visiting massage therapist, a book discussion group, stretch breaks, yoga classes, group lunches or celebrations, and various after-hours activities. Of course, these should not encroach on work time or productivity.
7. *Physical activities.* This refers to any efforts to facilitate or encourage more physical activity or exercise, either during the work day or afterward. It includes on-site fitness centers or exercise rooms, lunch-time walking or running groups, mind/body classes, stretch breaks, “walk 10K a day” programs, and team sports such as softball and volleyball.

Programs aimed at changing entrenched behaviors and habits, such as weight loss and tobacco cessation, will need to be offered on a recurring basis. One shot won’t do. Communication about these programs will also have to be repetitive and sent through multiple channels. People don’t typically buy into such programs the first time they hear about them. There is a process of becoming ready to change, and it is important that the program be available and visible when a given individual arrives at that point. Incentives are also helpful for getting people to make significant changes.

Education and awareness activities, on the other hand, can often be one-shot offerings. They help people by providing them with useful information, but they do not usually lead to major behavior change. The advantages of education and awareness activities are that they can be fun and responsive to what employees have told you they want; they are inexpensive and easy to do; and they can be the first step in the change process, helping to pave the way for significant changes later.

Be sure to leverage your EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (EAP) for your wellness program. It will most likely have a wealth of relevant offerings. Following are just a few of the services EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (EAP) offers that can augment a wellness program:

- Assessment and short-term counseling for a variety of concerns, including emotions, substance abuse, stress, relationships, and work
- Wellness seminars (brown-bag or lunch-and-learns) on dozens of topics (ask for a list)
- Online self-assessment tools that provide personalized feedback and suggestions, e.g., for depression, substance abuse, diet, and more

## **Choose Appropriate Activities Continued:**

- Online tutorials and articles on many wellness-related subjects
- Coaching for lifestyle or behavior change
- Child care, senior care, legal, and financial information
- Health fair representation, with literature and giveaways
- Management referrals to EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (EAP) for issues that are impacting an employee's performance

## **Other resources for wellness activities**

### *Internal departments:*

- Human Resources to provide information on medical, Employee Assistance Programs (EAP), and other benefits
- Safety or Corporate Security for information on safety procedures, accident prevention, avoiding crime victimization, etc.
- Occupational Health for first aid training, health screenings, etc.

### *External resources:*

- Health care benefits vendor
- Other benefits vendors
- National public-service organizations
- Partnership for Workplace Mental Health at [www.workplacementalhealth.org](http://www.workplacementalhealth.org)
- Many local physicians, hospitals, dentists, nutritionists, personal trainers, fitness centers, chiropractors, pharmaceutical reps, mental health centers, and other professionals will provide free lectures and screenings.

More examples of interventions and resources can be found in **Appendix A**

